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TMC leaders' Kolkata rape comments widen rift in party

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India's port ban on cargo hikes shipping costs

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India-Pak clash likely in Asia Cup 2025: Report

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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3 KILLED IN JAGANNATH RATH YATRA STAMPEDE IN ODISHA

Two trucks entered the densely packed area in Puri, triggering stampede

PURI, 29 JUNE

At least three people, including two women, lost their lives and around 50 others were injured in a stampede near Shree Gundicha Temple in Puri, Odisha, early Sunday morning during the ongoing Rath Yatra festivities.

The incident occurred at around 4.20 am when thousands of devotees had gathered near the chariots of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra, which were parked outside the temple. According to officials, the stampede happened after two trucks carrying ritual materials entered the densely packed area, triggering panic in the crowd.

Eyewitnesses described scenes of confusion and poor crowd management. This is the seventh stampede in India this year, raising serious questions about the handling of large religious gatherings.

The deceased are Basanti Sahu, 36 from Bolagarh, and Premakant Mohanty, 80, and Pravati Das, 42, from Balipatna. Their bodies were handed over to family members for cremation at Swargadwar in Puri.

Six of the injured remain in critical condition and are undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital.

The Shree Gundicha Temple, located around 3 km from the main Jagannath Temple, is considered the aunt's home of the deities. As per tradition, the deities are brought here during Rath Yatra and stay for seven days before returning.

Family members of a victim mourn at a hospital after a stampede near Shree Gundicha Temple in Puri, Odisha, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

The stampede occurred during the ritual of removing the 'Pahuda' cloth, when devotees rush to catch a glimpse of the deities.

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Majhi transferred District Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain and Superintendent of Police Vineet Agrawal. Two police officials, DCP Bishnu Pati and Commandant Ajay Padhi, were suspended. An administrative inquiry has been ordered, led by the development commissioner.

Majhi also announced Rs 25 lakh compensation for each deceased victim's family. Senior bureaucrat Aravind Agarwal has been appointed to oversee Rath Yatra operations, while Saswata Mishra was named Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, in addition to his existing roles. In a post on X, Majhi apologised to Lord Jagannath's devotees and pledged strict action against those responsible for security lapses. —*PTI*

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A YEAR OF STAMPEDES

TIRUPATI TEMPLE, 8 JAN
6 dead in a stampede at Tirupati's Vishnu Niwasam during token distribution for Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan. A crowd surge occurred after a gate was opened.

MAHA KUMBH, 29 JAN
30 killed, 60 injured in a stampede in Prayagraj, when a large number of pilgrims turned up for a holy bath ahead of the 'Amrit Snan'.

NEW DELHI RLY STN, 15 FEB
Eighteen died, including 11 women and 5 children, amid panic at overcrowded platforms while waiting for trains to Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh Mela, due to delays and confusion.

GOA TEMPLE, 3 MAY
6 people were killed and 50 injured after a stampede broke out during the annual Lairai Devi jatra (procession) in Shirgaon, North Goa.

BENGALURU, 4 JUNE
Jubilation turned to horror in Bengaluru as a stampede near Chinnaswamy Stadium killed 11 and injured 33. Lakhs of fans celebrating RCB's first IPL title caused the deadly crowd surge.

Family members of a victim mourn at the hospital after a stampede

Census to begin with houselisting ops on 1 April, 2026

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The houselisting operations for the forthcoming Census will begin from 1 April, 2026, marking the start of the first phase of the decennial exercise, the Registrar General of India has said.

The Centre has asked states and Union Territories to make proposed changes in the boundaries of administrative units before 31 December.

Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Mritunjay Kumar Narayan said that for the Census, all villages and towns are divided into uniform enumeration blocks, with an enumerator for each block to avoid any miss or repetition.

The Census can be conducted only three months after the freezing of boundary limits of administrative units such as districts, sub-districts, tehsils, talukas and police stations.

While the Houselisting Operation, the appointment of supervisors and enumerators and work division will be done on 1 April, 2026, the population Census will begin on 1 February, 2027.

Once enumeration blocks are finalised, boundaries of administrative units cannot be changed.

To ensure a fair workload for enumerators, an administrative unit is divided into manageable sections called Houselisting Blocks.

India's 16th Census with caste enumeration will be conducted in 2027 with the reference date of October 1, 2026, in snow-bound areas like Ladakh and March 1, 2027, in the rest of the country.

During Population Enumeration, the demographic, socio-economic, cultural and other details of every person in each household will be taken.

It is the 16th Census till now and the eighth after independence. —*PTI*

- To ensure a fair workload for enumerators, an administrative unit is divided into manageable sections called Houselisting Blocks.

Cong sends Surjewala to State amid dissent

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Congress General Secretary in charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala will hold separate meetings with party legislators on Monday, amid signs of unrest within the ruling party. The meetings gained significance as several MLAs have recently voiced dissatisfaction over the government's functioning.

There are also talks within party circles of a possible cabinet reshuffle and a change of State Congress President.

Adding to the rumours, Congress MLA HA Iqbal Hussain on Sunday claimed that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar may get an opportunity to become the Chief Minister within the next two to three months. Hussain is a close aide to Shivakumar.

"I don't believe in speculation. We have full confidence that the high command is aware of the situation and will take an appropriate decision at the right time to give him an opportunity," he added. "A decision will be made in two-three months". —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

- Congress MLA HA Iqbal Hussain claimed that DyCM DK Shivakumar may get an opportunity to become Chief Minister.

PURE JOY, POURED FROM THE SKY

A child enjoys rain at India Gate lawns in New Delhi. While Delhi saw joy, monsoon chaos hit other regions. A cloudburst in Uttarkashi killed two workers, seven are missing. Early monsoon brought widespread rain, landslides in hilly areas, and rising river levels across northern states nearly a week ahead **PHOTO: PTI** ***>>>More on Pg 4***

Deserves contempt: India fumes as Pak blames it for suicide attack

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Sunday refuted the Pakistan Army's claim of India being behind the Waziristan suicide bomber attack, which killed 13 soldiers.

"We have seen an official statement by the Pakistan Army seeking to blame India for the attack on Waziristan on 28 June. We reject this statement with the contempt it deserves," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on X.

A suicide bomber rammed a vehicle laden with explosives into a Pakistani military convoy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district on 28 June, killing 13 soldiers and injuring 10 army personnel and 19 civilians.

Fitna-al-Khawarij carried out the attack, the Pakistan military's media wing, Inter-Services Public Relations' said in a statement, The Dawn reported.

According to The Dawn, ISPR said in a statement that "in their desperation, an explosive-laden vehicle was rammed by the Indian sponsored kharijis into one of the vehicles of the leading group."

The statement also said tha during an intelligence-based operationin South Waziristan.

However, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. t 13 brave sons of the soil, embraced shahadat (martyrdom) in this tragic and barbaric incident, Two children and a woman also sustained critical injuries.

The attack took place within days of two soldiers being killed and 11 terrorists being eliminated.

A rise in violence was recorded in Pakistan's regions bordering Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power in Kabul in 2021.

Islamabad accused the neighbouring country of allowing attacks on Pakistan from its soil. —*Agencies*

A suicide bomber rammed a vehicle laden with explosives into a Pakistani military convoy killing 13 soldiers **PHOTO: X**

SEXUAL ASSAULT SUSPECTED

Woman's body stuffed into sack, found in B'luru garbage truck

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

The body of an unidentified woman was found stuffed in a sack and dumped in a garbage truck under the Chennammanakere Achukattu Police Station limits in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Police said the woman, believed to be between 30 and 35 years old, was possibly sexually assaulted before being murdered. She was discovered wearing a T-shirt bearing the logo of a private firm and a pair of pants, but no undergarments.

The body, tied up and placed inside a gunny bag, was likely dumped in the garbage truck between Saturday night and early Sunday. A resident who had come to dispose of waste grew suspicious on seeing the sack and alerted the police. BBMP sanitation staff also flagged the discovery.

According to Joint Commissioner of Police C Vamsi Krishna, "The woman's hands and neck were tied. Her legs were tied to her neck and the body was stuffed into a bag before being discarded. A BBMP garbage truck driver noticed it and informed us. A murder case has been registered and investigation is ongoing."

Preliminary findings suggest death due to smothering. The exact cause of death and confirmation of sexual assault will be established after the post-mortem.

CCTV footage from the area is being reviewed. Police suspect the body was transported in an auto-rickshaw and dumped from a vehicle between 12.30 am and 12.40 am.

This incident follows the recent murder of 33-year-old Harini R, a mother of two, allegedly killed by a techie, Yashas, after she attempted to end their affair. —*PTI*

Maharashtra withdraws Hindi as 3rd language in schools

MUMBAI, 29 JUNE

Facing public outrage and political backlash, the Maharashtra government has withdrawn two government resolutions (GRs) on implementing Hindi as a third language in primary schools under the three-language policy.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced the rollback at a press conference ahead of the state Assembly's monsoon session. He also declared the formation of a committee, led by educationist Dr Narendra Jadhav, to recommend a revised approach to language policy in schools.

The now-withdrawn GRs, issued on April 16 and June 17, proposed making Hindi a compulsory third language for Classes 1 to 5 in English and Marathi medium schools. The 17 June revision had made Hindi optional but stated it would "generally" be the third language, sparking fresh controversy.

Fadnavis defended the policy, claiming the original framework was approved during Uddhav Thackeray's tenure, based on recommendations from the Dr Raghunath Mashelkar committee. He accused Thackeray of hypocrisy, opposing Hindi while accepting English in the curriculum. The rollback followed protests led by the Shiv Sena (UBT), with copies of the 17 June GR burned across Maharashtra. Uddhav Thackeray clarified he was not against Hindi but against its imposition. The June 17 order had also allowed schools to arrange instruction in other Indian languages if 20 or more students opted for one. The issue has reignited the 'Hindi imposition' debate, particularly in non-Hindi-speaking states. With civic polls approaching in Mumbai, the language row has also brought Uddhav and Raj together for a joint protest scheduled on 5 July. —*PTI*

GP member held for firing in the air during b'day bash

BELAGAVI, 29 JUNE

Belagavi police arrested Kudachi gram panchayat member Baabajan Khalimullah for firing in the air during his birthday celebrations, in Kudachi town of Raibag taluk in Belagavi on Saturday night. Baabajan a Congress party worker had thrown a party to celebrate his birthday for his friends and supporters. During the celebrations, he opened fire with an air gun and later roamed on the road by holding a knife in the hand. After the videos went viral, the Kudachi police registered a suo-motu case and later arrested Baabajan. *—Salar News*

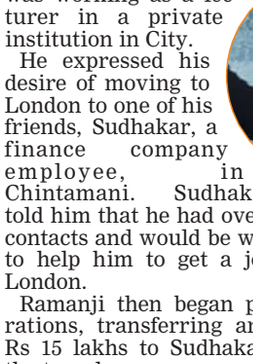
PHOTO: ANI

Decomposed body found in M'luru KSRTC bus stand

MANGALURU, 29 JUNE

Police have launched an investigation following the discovery of a highly decomposed body of a man, estimated to be aged between 35 and 40, in the basement of an under-construction commercial building near the KSRTC bus stand. The grim finding was made around 3pm on June 28 by a worker who had gone to address a water supply issue in the basement, which was partially flooded with approximately three feet of water. Urwa police, alongside forensic experts and crime scene specialists, attended the scene to conduct preliminary investigations. A murder case has been registered under Crime No. 57/2025, invoking Section 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023. Authorities are currently endeavouring to identify the deceased and determine the cause and circumstances surrounding his death, as stated by Commissioner of Police Sudheer Kumar Reddy CH. *—Agencies*

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLITY



KSBDB and KSPCB launched 'Hasiru Sankalpa' which aims to highlight State's sustainable and bio energy transition

PHOTO: SALAR

Surjewala to visit State as Cong rifts mount

DKS' aide says DyCM will become CM in 2-3 months amid buzz over KPCC Prez position

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Congress General Secretary in charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala will hold separate meetings with party legislators on Monday, amid signs of unrest within the ruling party. The meetings gained significance as several MLAs have recently voiced dissatisfaction over the government's functioning.

The development comes as speculations over a leadership change in State has resurfaced, following Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna's recent remarks hinting at "revolutionary" political developments after September.

There are also talks within party circles of a possible cabinet reshuffle and a change of State Congress President.

Adding to the speculations, Congress MLA HA Iqbal Hussain on Sunday claimed that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar may get an opportunity to become the Chief Minister within the next two to three months. Hussain is a close aide to Shivakumar.

"Yes, he is coming... There will definitely be meetings.

Randeep Singh Surjewala *PHOTO: PTI*

He (Surjewala) has directly informed everyone. I've also received the programme and I'm informing all our MLAs," Shivakumar said, confirming Surjewala's one-on-one meetings with party legislators.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah met both Kagwad MLA Raju Patil, who alleged bribery in housing allotment, and Aland MLA BR Kage, who had hinted at resigning because the administration had "completely collapsed", on Wednesday after returning from New Delhi and reportedly assured them that their concerns would be addressed.

According to reports, the party leadership has asked Siddaramaiah to ensure no one makes public statements against the government.

Yet, Hussain was confident about a change in leadership.

"You all know what our (Congress's) strength was before this government came to power. Everyone knows who put in the struggle, sweat, effort and interest to achieve this victory. His (Shivakumar's) strategy and programmes are history now," Hussain told reporters in Ramanagara.

"I don't believe in speculation. We have full confidence that the high command is aware of the situation and will take an appropriate decision at the right time to give him an opportunity," he added.

When asked if Shivakumar, who is also the State Congress President, would become CM this year, Hussain replied, "Yes, I'm saying it. The date some leaders are hinting at for revolutionary political developments after September—this is what they are talking about. A decision will be made within two to three months."

When asked about Siddaramaiah's son and Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah dismissing the rumours as mere speculation, Hussain pointed out that the Congress high command had decided on government formation after the 2023 Assembly polls. "We were all together in Delhi then. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and Mallikarjun Kharge made the decision. Everyone knows that. They will take the next decision too—we'll have to wait and watch," he said. *– PTI*

> **DK Shivakumar's horoscope is not favourable. He has to seize power by force. He doesn't have natural luck**
>
>
>
> -R Ashoka, BJP Leader

> **Has Ashoka started practising astrology? If he has, get me an appointment—I have questions for him too**
>
>
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

Why are there talks about CM change now?

Infighting in the ruling Congress is not new. During the 2023 Assembly elections, both Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar fiercely fought against each other for the CM position. However, the high command intervened and seemingly settled the dispute. Following the recent City stampede, questions resurfaced, as the BJP launched scathing attacks against the Congress. Pressure mounted amid recent reports of corruption in the administration.

In a 1st, KRS reaches its full capacity in June

MYSURU, 29 JUNE

In a first, the KRS dam, the lifeline of old Mysore region, reached its full capacity in June.

After a gap of 83 years, the reservoir reached its full capacity of 124.4ft. The last time the dam reached its capacity was in 1941.

Marking this rare event, CM Siddaramaiah will offer the traditional bagina on Monday.

In view of this landmark occasion, the Cauvery Neeravari Nigam has undertaken elaborate preparations. The dam is being whitewashed, and Kannada flags now flutter in the area.

The ceremonial event will take place at Srirangapatna taluk, Mandya district. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, ministers, and local MLAs will attend the event.

"Typically, baagina is offered at the end of July or in Aug. But due to a good monsoon this year, the reservoir has already been filled in June," the Chief Minister's Office said in a statement.

CM Siddaramaiah will visit the dam and over bagin on Monday to mark the historic event *PHOTO: PTI*

Baagina consists of a sari, blouse fabric, flowers, fruits, bangles, arishina-kumkuma (turmeric and vermilion), and rice placed on a bamboo mora.

After the offering, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar, who also holds the Water portfolio, will offer prayers at the Cauvery statue.

Meanwhile, Kabini reservoir saw a slight increase in both inflow and outflow. *–Salar News*

Will respond as per law: DKS on Cauvery Aarti case

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday said the government would respond in accordance with the law to the High Court notice regarding the proposed 'Cauvery Aarti' near the Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) reservoir in Mandya district.

The Karnataka High Court had issued the notice on Friday in response to a petition challenging the event, citing potential ecological and safety concerns.

"We will respond as per the law. No one will obstruct prayers. Some have concerns, and the government will do what's necessary to address them... we conduct pooja there every day," Shivakumar told reporters.

The High Court division bench has directed all respondents to submit their replies within two weeks.

- Shivakumar said, 'we will respond as per the law.... we conduct pooja there every day' in response to the HC's notice to the government on the aarti

The petition challenges the Water Resources Department's plan to organise a Cauvery Aarti, modelled on the Ganga Aarti in Varanasi, for which the State has reportedly sanctioned Rs 92.30 crore. The government had planned to launch the event by Dasara and is building infrastructure to accommodate around 10,000 spectators, along with parking and other amenities. *—PTI*

Minister HCM reviews facilities on Chamundi Hill

MYSURU, 29 JUNE

In light of the increasing influx of devotees during the auspicious Ashada month, District In-Charge Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa conducted an inspection of facilities for devotees and tourists atop Chamundi Hill in Mysuru on Sunday, accompanied by district administration officials.

During the visit, the minister evaluated crowd management plans, transportation provisions, security measures, and other key aspects of the ongoing Ashada Shukravara preparations. To enhance the darshan experience, an additional ticket counter will be opened near the Nandi Statue on Ashada Fridays and the following Saturdays and Sundays.

Police Commissioner Seema Latkar reported that crowd management and traffic flow were under control. *—SALAR NEWS*

Ambedkar didn't put 'secular' in Constitution: Ashoka

BENGALURU, JUNE 29

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka asserted that 'secular' was not included in the Constitution written by Baba Saheb Ambedkar, upping the ante over the debate reignited recently by the RSS.

"I identify myself as a Vokkaliga. Everyone identifies with their caste. If so, the term 'secular' has no meaning," he said, speaking to press.

"Let Congress leaders show where the words 'secular' and 'socialist' are in the Constitution written by BR Ambedkar. Rahul Gandhi demands a caste census on one hand and talks about secularism on the other.

BBMP to impose more tax

Ashoka claimed that the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) was financially bankrupt.

"According to my information, they will impose more taxes on people," he said.

"The high command is not allowing guarantees to be stopped. To save money, funds are being cut from all schemes, including pensions. Many beneficiaries are being disqualified," he claimed, without providing details.

On missing the recent BJP meeting, Ashoka said, "I was in Delhi at the time.... Everyone in the BJP must unite." *—Salar News*

TAKING CONTROL OF FUTURE

Children take part in a protest to support farmers, who are on their third day of stikes against land acquisition at Channarayapatna, Devanahalli, at Freedom Park in the City, on Sunday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Expelled Eshwarappa hints at return to BJP

BALLARI, 29 JUNE

Expelled BJP leader KS Eshwarappa has signalled a potential return to the party, asserting that "the BJP was his life." He stated there was no chance of him aligning with any other political organisation.

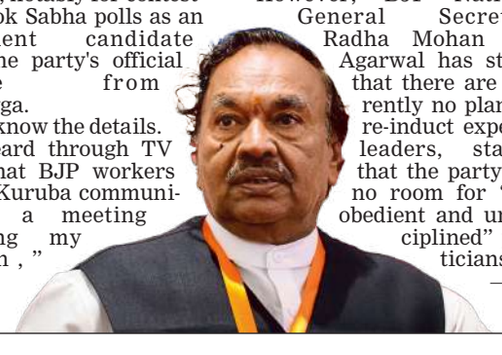
Eshwarappa was expelled from the BJP for six years last year due to violations of party discipline, notably for contesting the Lok Sabha polls as an independent candidate against the party's official nominee from Shivamogga.

"I don't know the details. I only heard through TV reports that BJP workers from the Kuruba community held a meeting demanding my return," Eshwarappa said. "Where will I go if I leave the BJP? My life is at this party."

He had previously accused State BJP chief BY Vijayendra and his father, veteran leader BS Yediyurappa, of denying his son a candidacy for Haveri.

Despite receiving overtures from the Congress government. Eshwarappa assserted his devotion to Hindutva and the BJP.

However, BJP National General Secretary Radha Mohan Das Agarwal has stated that there are currently no plans to re-induct expelled leaders, stating that the party has no room for "disobedient and undisciplined" politicians. *—PTI*



London-bound man murdered by agent over ₹ 15L

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 29 JUNE

A man, with dreams of making it big in London, went missing after leaving for the airport. His body was found weeks later decomposing in a well, allegedly killed by the friend facilitating the trip.

The victim, Ramanji, 30, was a double degree holder with an MSc Agriculture. He was working as a lecturer in a private institution in City.

He expressed his desire of moving to London to one of his friends, Sudhakar, a finance company employee, in Chintamani. Sudhakar told him that he had overseas contacts and would be willing to help him to get a job in London.

Ramanji then began preparations, transferring around Rs 15 lakhs to Sudhakar for the travel expenses.

On 19 June, Sudhakar picked Ramanji up from his house to drop him at the airport. However, there was no news of Ramanji from then on.

Meanwhile, locals in Kempadenahalli in Chintamani taluk found a decomposed body in a well. Two stones were tied to the body. Police lifted the body and a post mortem was conducted.

Photos of the body and other belongings of the deceased were posted on social media to help identify the body.

Ramanji's brother, Viswanath, rushed to Chintamani rural police station, and confirmed that it was his brother's body.

Soon after, police took Sudhakar into custody who confessed to the crime. He said Ramanji was demanding the money back, prompting his decision to kill Ramanji. With the help of his younger brother Manoj and another accused Manjunth, Sudhakar strangled Ramanji, burnt his belongings and dumped the body in the well. *– Salar News*

LIVELIHOODS LOST

Riders hold hunger strike, write to CM on bike taxi ban

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

Members of the Bike Taxi Welfare Association began a hunger protest on Sunday, demanding that the State government lifts the ban on bike taxis and calling for an inclusive policy framework. They have also written an open letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

According to the association, protests were held in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Mandya, Davangere, and Ramanagara.

"Sir, we, who ride through rain and sun to serve Karnataka, are writing this letter not out of anger but out of desperation. For many of us, this work is the only thing standing between dignity and destitution," the association's letter to the Chief Minister stated.

The association said many riders have been left without work or alternatives, pushing them into extreme hardship. Some members have even been forced to beg on the streets to feed their families.

Members of the Bike Taxi Welfare Association began a hunger strike, with protests in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Mandya, Davangere, and Ramanagara *PHOTO:X@Rahul Kumar*

"In a final plea to be heard, we are now preparing to go on an indefinite hunger strike if our voices continue to be ignored. This is not out of protest, but sheer helplessness—hoping someone will listen before it's too late," they added.

Nearly 80 per cent of the riders are local Kannadigas from modest backgrounds, the association said.

"We are students, single mothers, homemakers, and former migrant workers who have returned to our home State to work and contribute meaningfully. The flexibility this work offers has empowered lakhs, especially in areas where other livelihood options are limited."

The association also expressed frustration over what they called unequal treatment of their profession. While two-wheelers are allowed for food and parcel delivery under white number plates, those providing passenger rides on similar vehicles face penalties and harassment, they said.

"Sir, we are not asking for favours. We are asking to be heard. A policy shaped with our voices included will be grounded in reality, sustainable in implementation, and fair to all stakeholders—the government, platforms, riders, and the people of Karnataka," the open letter to Siddaramaiah stated.

- The association said many riders have been left without work or alternatives, pushing them into extreme hardship. Some members have even been forced to beg on the streets to feed their families.

App-based bike taxi services were suspended across State on 16 June after the Karnataka High Court refused to stay an earlier order suspending such operations unless the State government notifies relevant guidelines under the Motor Vehicles Act. *–PTI*

PHOTO: X

Kejriwal urges slum-dwellers to protest demolitions

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday urged slum-dwellers to protest against the BJP-led government's demolition drives and called on them to reject both BJP and Congress in future elections. Addressing a protest at Jantar Mantar, Kejriwal said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said 'Jahan Jhuggi, Wahan Makan', but what he meant was 'Jahan Jhuggi, Wahan Maidan'. His promises are false and I urge you not to fall for them in future." The AAP chief alleged that the Rekha Gupta-led Delhi government had "ruined" the city in the past five months. Calling on slum dwellers to unite, he said, "There are 40 lakh slum dwellers. If you take to the roads, they will be forced to stop the demolitions."—*PTI*

Amit Shah rules out talks with 'armed' Maoists

HYDERABAD, 29 JUNE

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday ruled out talks with Maoists and said the the proscribed outfit should give up arms, surrender before police and join the mainstream. Addressing a rally after inaugurating the national headquarters of the Turmeric Board in Nizamabad, Shah also said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is still raising questions on Operation Sindoor, should see the weak appearance of Pakistan to understand the effectiveness of operation. "Congress asks Centreto hold discussions with Maoists. Our government's policy is 'no talk' with those who hold arms. Give up weapons, surrender, and join the mainstream," Shah said, about 10,000 people in Northeast gave up and joined mainstream.—*PTI*

Panchayat polls rescheduled in Uttarakhand

DEHRADUN, 29 JUNE

Panchayat elections in Uttarakhand will now be held on 24 and 28 July, after the Uttarakhand HC vacated its stay on them. A revised notification rescheduling the polls was issued by state election commission on Saturday. Revised notification said, polling for the three-tier panchayat elections will be held in two phases on 24 and 28 July, and counting of votes will take place on 31 July. The filing of nominations will begin on 2 July till 5 July, State Election Commissioner Sushil Kumar said. The Uttarakhand High Court had put a stay on panchayat elections in state on 23 June while hearing petitions citing irregularities in the state's reservation rosters for the polls.—*PTI*

Those who fought in Emergency must be remembered: PM

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

In his Mann Ki Baat broadcast on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the 1975 Emergency, calling it a "murder of the Constitution" and warning citizens to remain vigilant in safeguarding democracy. Without naming the Congress or then PM Indira Gandhi, Modi said the judiciary was reduced to a puppet and freedom of speech was crushed. He played archival audio clips of Morarji Desai, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Jagjivan Ram highlighting the repression of the time. Modi recalled the jailing of over one lakh people, including George Fernandes, under MISA. Marking the 50th anniversary of the Emergency, he urged nation to remember those who resisted, stating that the people ultimately defeated dictatorship through democratic power.—*PTI*

Stampede eyewitnesses blame poor crowd control

A separate way was made for VIPs leading to congestion

People gather near the chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra during the annual 'Rath Yatra' festival celebration, in Puri, Odisha *PHOTO: PTI*

BENGALURU, 29 JUNE

An eyewitness account on the incident that unfolded during the stampede near the Shree Gundicha Temple in Odisha's Puri during the Jagannath Rath Yatra, claimed that the administration crowd management was poor and that the biggest issue was the exit gate.

A man who lost his wife in the incident blamed the poor emergency response, claiming that neither rescue teams nor fire officials responded at the time of the incident.

The man told ANI, "When this incident happened, no one responded, neither the fire officials, nor the rescue team, nor the hospital team."

Officials claim that the disarray occurred when two trucks having the ritual materials entered the crowd, triggering panic and eventually leading to the stampede.

The victims have been identified as Basanti Sahu from Bolagarh, and Premakant Mohanty and Pravati Das from Balipatna.

Meanwhile, six others injured in the incident are reported to be in critical condition.

A resident of Puri and an eyewitness, Swadhin Kumar Panda, said there were several setbacks in the crown management.

He told ANI that he was there near the temple from 2am to 3am and the crowd management was not good.

Panda said that a separate way for the VIPs and that common people were asked to take the exit from a distance. He blamed the traffic management and Odisha administration saying that the administration crowd management wasn't proper and that the exit gate was biggest issue as people were exiting from the entrance, which increased the crowd."

Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichanda assured me that the situation is now under control and people are having darshan.

The Rath Yatra began on Saturday with chariots carrying the three deities — Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra — to the Shree Gundicha Temple which is considered their aunt's home. —*Agencies*

> **This tragedy is a serious warning – for such large events, security arrangements and crowd management preparations must be taken seriously and thoroughly reviewed. Protecting lives is paramount, and no lapses in this responsibility are acceptable.**
>
> -Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

Family member of the victim *PHOTO: PTI*

> **The management there should have made better arrangements... I express my condolences**
>
> -Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister

Delhi govt seeks ₹1K cr to combat air pollution

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The Delhi government has requested Rs 1,000 crore in funding from the Centre to deploy new technology and implement measures aimed at reducing Air Quality Index of Delhi. Delhi Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh and Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa inspected he Nehru Park on Sunday for installing of air purifiers in an area of 600 square meters each. The project will be funded by Corporate Social Responsibility partnerships with private firms, ensuring that there is no direct financial burden on te government. The purifiers use unique system to capture and store polluting particles, operating 24/7 with low maintenance requirements. —*PTI*

Sabotage angle being probed in Air India plane crash: Govt

AHMEDABAD, 29 JUNE

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is examining all potential causes including sabotage behind last month's fatal Air India crash in Ahmedabad that claimed 274 lives, both on board and on the ground, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol has confirmed.

Speaking to NDTV at Pune's Emerging Business Conclave, Mr Mohol stated that the aircraft's black box, containing both the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and Flight Data Recorder (FDR), is in AAIB custody and will not be sent abroad. "The investigation is being conducted entirely in India," he emphasised.

Flight AI 171 crashed shortly after take-off, around 1.30pm, into residential quarters of BJ Medical College in Meghaninagar, erupting in flames. Nine students and their family members were among those killed on the ground. The pilot had issued a 'Mayday' distress call, suggesting a full-scale emergency.

Experts suspect a rare dual engine failure may be the cause, a scenario Mr Mohol called unprecedented. "It's too early to confirm whether it was an engine issue, fuel problem, or something else — the black box will reveal more," he said, adding that a report is expected within three months.

To reassure the public, Mr Mohol noted all 33 Air India Dreamliners have undergone safety checks ordered by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). He also addressed broader concerns, including 419 technical vacancies in the DGCA and efforts to provide affordable food options at airports through Udaan Yatri Cafés. —*Agencies*

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AAP AMRITSAR MLA SUSPENDED FOR ANTI-PARTY ACTIVITIES

CHANDIGARH, 29 JUNE

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has suspended Amritsar North MLA Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh for five years due to alleged anti-party activities. His suspension follows questioning of the actions taken by the Vigilance Bureau during a raid on Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia's residence in connection with a disproportionate assets case. Party sources indicate that this decision, made by the AAP's political affairs committee, conveys an unequivocal message against political interference in the drug campaign.

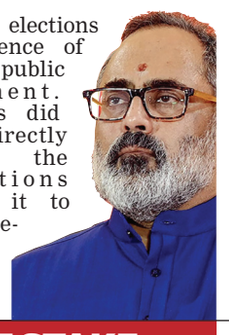
Singh had previously criticised the manner of the raid, asserting it violated principles of dignity and respect for individuals, regardless of their political affiliations. Following the announcement on social media, Singh quoted Kabir, conveying a sense of personal contentment despite the situation.

Majithia was arrested following the raid on 25 June, leading to public protests from his family. —*PTI*

Cong won Nilambur with Jamaat's support: BJP

T,PURAM, 29 JUNE

Kerala BJP President Rajeev Chandrasekhar has alleged that the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) won the recent Nilambur Assembly by-election due to support from Jamaat-e-Islami, which he labelled "illegal, anti-national, and anti-constitutional." Chandrasekhar claimed the victory was not Congress's, but that of Jamaat-e-Islami, accusing the UDF of mainstreaming extremist groups for political gain. UDF candidate Aryadan Shoukath defeated CPI(M)'s M Swaraj by 11,077 votes. The by-election was necessitated by the resignation of LDF-backed independent MLA PV Anvar, who later joined the Trinamool Congress. CPI(M) state secretary MV Govindan also criticised the UDF, accusing it of communal campaigning and abandoning secular politics. The Congress, meanwhile, hailed the result as a reflection of growing anti-incumbency against the Pinarayi Vijayan government, citing both the bypoll win and their clean sweep in recent parliamentary elections as evidence of shifting public sentiment. Congress did not directly address the allegations linking it to Jamaat-e-Islami. —*ANI*



CIVILIAN SAFETY AT STAKE

Half of central funds for border bunkers in J&K unused: RTI

JAMMU, 29 JUNE

Jammu and Kashmir administration has not utilised nearly half of the central funds allocated for building underground bunkers for border residents over the last five years, according to information obtained through a Right to Information (RTI) application.

The revelation comes amid heightened calls for civilian safety, following last month's Operation Sindoor and the intense cross-border shelling.

Responding to the Right To Information application filed by Jammu-based activist Raman Kumar, J&K Home Department said, an amount of Rs 242.77 crore was given to the Union Territory administration headed by the Lt Governor between 2020-21 and 2024-25. However, 46.58 per cent of the money remains unspent.

India shares a 3,323km border with Pakistan, of which 221km of the International Border (IB) and 744 km of the Line of Control (LoC) fall in J&K.

India and Pakistan had initially signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but Pakistan frequently violated the agreement, with more than 5,000 violations reported in 2020 -- the highest in a single year.

The Centre initially sanctioned the construction of 14,460 individual and community bunkers for Rs 415.73 crore for border residents facing Pakistani shelling along the LoC and the IB in 2018-19.

While 7,298 bunkers were sanctioned for the population along the LoC in the twin districts of Poonch and Rajouri, 7,162 underground bunkers got approved for villages along the IB in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts.

Later, the government sanctioned more than 4,000 bunkers to cover a more vulnerable population, including the areas falling in the north Kashmir districts of Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara.

J&K Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo said, so far, 9,500 bunkers have been set up along the India-Pakistan border in the Union Territory. —*PTI*

Underground bunkers for border residents *PHOTO: X*

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Those whose parents are named in the 2003 roll need only establish their own birth details *PHOTO: PTI*

EC says 4.96 crore voters need not give docus in Bihar

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The Election Commission (EC) has launched a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll in Bihar ahead of state elections, triggering objections from opposition parties over its timing and intent.

To streamline the process, the EC will upload the 2003 electoral roll, enabling approximately 4.96 crore voters—around 60 per cent of Bihar's electorate—to use it as proof of eligibility without submitting additional documents. The remaining 3 crore voters must provide one of eleven specified documents. Those whose parents are named in the 2003 roll need only establish their own birth details.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar stated that the revision seeks to ensure that no eligible citizen is excluded and no ineligible individual included, in line with Article 326 of the Constitution. He urged parties to engage by appointing Booth Level Agents (BLAs) rather than raising concerns later.

However, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi opposed the move, arguing that the EC had already conducted a Special Summary Revision (SSR), which addressed similar issues such as migration, urbanisation, and non-reporting of deaths. To counter concerns about illegal migrants, the EC has introduced a declaration form for applicants born between July 1987 and December 2004, requiring additional documentation about parental origins.

While the EC defends the revision as essential for accurate rolls, opposition parties suspect it could lead to deliberate voter exclusions in the run-up to the crucial state polls. —*PTI*

SAVED BY QUICK REFLEX

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav addressing a rally as drone crashed into the podium in Patna, on Sunday *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Tejashwi dodges drone crash at Bihar rally

PATNA, 29 JUNE

RJD leader and former cricketer Tejashwi Yadav showcased his quick reflexes when he ducked to avoid being hit by a drone which crashed into his podium during the 'Save Waqf, Save Constitution' rally at Patna's Gandhi Maidam on Sunday.

The matter was being investigated.

Meanwhile, Yadav slammed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), while countering the ruling alliance's 'Jungle Raj' jibe, saying that their "tactics of spreading fear are not going to work". Bihar assembly polls are scheduled later this year.

He questioned Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led NDA alliance for avoiding trade issues.

Yadav said that RJD would form a government that prioritises education, healthcare, income, and many other issues.

BJP, Janata Dal-United JD (U) and other NDA leaders referred to "jungle raj" under Lalu Prasad, saying his government neglect infrastructure development.

Union Minister Chirag Paswan said that he wanted to contest the upcoming assembly polls Bihar's sake unfazed by "jittery" detractors trying to put hurdles in the way.

He also attacked Yadav for allying with Congress for the sake of power. —*PTI*

- Yadav said that RJD would form a government that prioritises education, healthcare, income, and many other issues.

M'rashtra baby girl abandoned with apology note

MUMBAI, 29 JUNE

A three-day-old baby girl was found abandoned in a basket in Takka Colony, Navi Mumbai, with her parents leaving behind a note expressing regret over their financial inability to raise her. A local resident discovered the infant and promptly alerted the authorities. The police took the child into their care and found a note written in English, in which the parents apologised for their decision and cited their poor financial condition as the reason for abandoning her. A paediatrician examined the infant and confirmed that she was stable. The police are actively searching for the child's parents, while a case has been registered against unknown individuals. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

7 suspended for Bhopal bridge design flaw

BHOPAL, 29 JUNE

The Madhya Pradesh government has suspended seven engineers, including two chief engineers, over the faulty design of a new rail overbridge in Bhopal's Aishbagh area. The bridge, costing Rs 18 crore, drew public criticism for featuring a dangerous 90-degree turn. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced the suspensions and a departmental inquiry against a retired engineer. The construction agency and design consultant have been blacklisted.

A committee will now oversee necessary design improvements before the bridge is inaugurated. Officials had cited land constraints and proximity to a metro station as reasons for the sharp turn, but critics argue the design is unsafe. The bridge was intended to ease traffic for nearly three lakh residents connecting Pushpa Nagar, Mahamai Ka Bagh, and New Bhopal. *—Agencies*

UP man drowns in pond after bovine attack

HATHRAS, 29 JUNE

A 55-year-old man died in Nagla Ani village in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district, after being attacked by a cow and falling into a muddy pond on Sunday morning. As Santosh Kumar attempted to untie his own cow near the pond,another bovine charged at him, causing him to tumble into the marshy water. Being trapped he began to sink in the pond's thick mud. Despite efforts of villagers, he could not be sav. It took approximately two hours for authorities and villagers to recover his body. Police and administrative officials arrived at the scene shortly thereafter. His body has since been sent for a post-mortem, a police official said. *—PTI*

360 exhibitors from India join garment fair

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Over 360 exhibitors from India will showcase a wide range of products to buyers from 79 countries including the UK, Spain, Greece, Italy, France and Germany during the India International Garment Fair (IIGF) to be held here from 1 July to 3. The Apparel Export Promotion Council chairman Sudhir Sekhri said the fair will showcase latest apparel trends tailored to meet the requirements of the European Union, US and other Western markets. India's ready-made garment exports rose by 12.8 per cent to USD 2.88 billion during April- May. Participants from 12 states including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Haryana will participate in the fair.*—PTI*

Police rescue students trapped in a school after heavy rains flooded its premises following heavy rain in East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand on Sunday; A swollen river Beas in Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh **PHOTO: PTI**

Monsoon covers India, brings chaos

Two dead in U'khand cloudburst; Trains stalled in Himachal; Several states on red alert

NEW DELHI/ SHIMLA/ UTTARKASHI, 29 JUNE

A cloudburst in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district early Sunday left two construction workers dead and seven missing as monsoon covered the entire country almost a week early than usual, bringing rain in Delhi and other northern states and triggering landslides in several hilly areas.

A red alert was issued for Sunday and 30 July in various districts of Uttarakhand, including Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri, Haridwar and Nainital. Authorities have put the Chardham yatra on hold for a day for the safety of pilgrims.

A similar red alert was issued for 12 districts in Himachal Pradesh, where rain-related incidents have claimed 17 lives.

In Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi, a landslide triggered by a cloudburst destroyed the shelters of 29 workers engaged in the construction of a hotel, washing away 10 metres of the Yamunotri National Highway. 20 were evacuated.

Bodies of two of the nine missing labourers were recovered from the banks of the Yamuna River near Tiladi Shaheed Smarak.

In Himachal Pradesh, services on the Shimla-Kalka rail line were suspended on Sunday after boulders and trees fell on the tracks following overnight rains in Solan district.

A landslide near Koti on the Shimla-Kalka National Highway resulted in traffic snarls.

The Kartavya Path in New Delhi during a spell of rain Sunday **PHOTO:PTI**

Authorities issued a warning for floods in 10 districts till 30 June,

The monsoon further advanced into remaining parts of Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana and the entire Delhi on Sunday.

- Very heavy rain is likely to occur in many parts of northwest, central, east and northeast India over the next seven days as the monsoon advanced further into remaining parts of Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and the entire Delhi on Sunday

Very heavy rain is likely to occur in many parts of northwest, central, east and northeast India over the next seven days.

A red alert was issued in parts of Jharkhand till July 1.

162 students, trapped in an inundated private residential school in Pandarsoli in the state's East Singhbhum district since 28 June, were rescued by the police on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the railway link to Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram and southern Assam was partially restored on Sunday, six days after it was snapped due to landslides in the Lumding-Badarpur hill section.

Train movements are expected to normalise by 30 June.

Authorities opened 13 shutters of the Mullaperiyar Dam in Kerala on Sunday, releasing water into the Periyar River as the water level rose after heavy rainfall in the dam's catchment areas.

Over 20 relief camps have been set up. *—PTI*

TMC leaders' Kolkata rape comments widen rift in party

KOLKATA, 29 JUNE

The rape of a 24-year-old law student at a Kolkata college on 25 June, allegedly gang-raped by three persons including an alumnus, has added fuel to the infighting in the ruling Trinamool Congress.

MP Mahua Moitra has termed "disgusting" the remarks by party MP Kalyan Banerjee's and MLA Madan Mitra's following the incidents.

Banerjee retorted with a personal attack, accusing her of "breaking a family", referring to her wedding with former BJD MP Pinaki Misra last month.

Soon after the rape incident, Banerjee had kicked up a storm by saying, "If a friend rapes a friend, how can you ensure security?" The remark was criticised as victim-blaming.

Meanwhile, National Commission for Women member Archana Majumdar on Sunday said police could not provide her the whereabouts of the survivor so that she could speak to her.

The Trinamool Congress sho caused party MLA Madan Mitra stating that his comments on the gangrape victim were uncalled for and insensitive.

In a letter to Mitra, TMC state president Subrata Bakshi show caused him for breaking party

Kalyan Banerjee **PHOTO:ANI**

rules and to reply within three days.

Mitra's comments were against the party's stand on the matter.

Mitra had said that the incident would not have happened had the student not gone to the college alone and taken some friends with her or informed people before going there.

Mitra said on X that his statements were "misled by a motivated group" to malign him. *— PTI*

CAMPUS VIOLENCE

Four IITs, 3 IIMs violate UGC anti-ragging norms

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Four Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and three Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are on the defaulter list for not complying with anti-ragging norms, according to officials at University Grants Commission (UGC).

The UGC has issued notices to 89 institutions across the country for not submitting mandatory compliance undertakings of anti-ragging norms. On the defaulter list are 17 Institutes of National Importance, including IITs, IIMs, AIIMS and NIDs. The defaulter IITs are IIT Bombay, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Palakkad and IIT Hyderabad. Similarly, IIM Bombay, IIM Rohtak and IIM Tiruchirpalli are also on the list.

The defaulters also include

AIIMS Raebareli and National Institute of Design – Delhi, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana.

"These institutions have failed to submit the mandatory Anti-Ragging undertakings by students and compliance undertaking by the institutions, despite multiple advisories issued by the UGC, follow-up calls from the Anti-Ragging Helpline, and direct interventions by the Anti Ragging Monitoring Agency," said UGC Secretary Manish Joshi. *—PTI*

Drunk man hands Kerala cops 2 infants' skeletons

THRISSUR, 29 JUNE

The Thrissur police have launched an investigation after a man arrived at a local station in an inebriated state early on Sunday, carrying a bag that he claimed contained the skeletal remains of two newborn babies.

According to police, the man told officers at Pudukad police station that the babies were born from his relationship with a woman, and that both infants had died and been buried at separate times and locations over the past four years.

The man, aged 26, and the woman, aged 21, are both unmarried. Police have taken them into custody and are questioning them as part of the investigation.

"A man turned up at the station around 12.30 am saying the bag had the remains of two babies," said a senior police officer. *—PTI*

Four dead, three injured as earth caves in at R'than excavation site

JAIPUR, 29 JUNE

Four labourers lost their lives and three others sustained injuries after soil caved in during a pipeline excavation on Sunday morning. The incident occurred near Jangi ka Nagla village while workers were filling a 10-foot deep trench for the pipeline, according to local police.

The disaster unfolded when the soil suddenly gave way, trapping several labourers beneath it. Hearing their cries for help, fellow workers and project personnel attempted immediate rescue efforts, but were hampered by the depth and weight of the earth.

Authorities, including district administration and disaster management teams, responded promptly to the emergency, deploying earthmoving machinery to aid in the rescue operation. They successfully located and retrieved seven trapped labourers; however, four were pronounced dead at the scene. The deceased have been identified as Anukul, 22, Vimla Devi, 45, Vinod Devi, 55, and Yogesh Kumari, 25. One injured individual received initial treatment, while two others are currently hospitalised. Out of the 12 workers initially on site, some managed to escape unharmed. *—PTI*

Lankan Navy arrests eight Indian fishermen for 'trespassing'

COLOMBO, 29 JUNE

The Sri Lankan Navy on Sunday arrested 8 Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters. The arrests were made during a search operation in the north of Mannar.

The fishermen and their trawler would be handed over to the Fisheries Inspectorate in Mannar for legal proceedings.

"The North Central Naval Command spotted a group of Indian fishing boats trespassing into Sri Lankan waters in the early hours of today. In response, the North Central Naval Command deployed its Inshore Patrol Craft to drive away those Indian fishing boats from island waters, north of Mannar," a Navy statement said.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering the island nation's territorial waters. *—PTI*

MOSTLY IN YOUNG INDIANS

HPV major factor for cancer rise in India

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Oncologists across India have expressed concern over Human Papillomavirus (HPV) becoming a major contributing factor in the rise of cancers in young Indians, particularly among those in their twenties and thirties.

With increasing cases of HPV related cervical, oral, and oropharyngeal cancers, India is on the brink of a preventable cancer crisis if urgent measures are not implemented.

Ashish Gupta, chief of medical oncology at Amerix Cancer Hospital, New Delhi, said, "HPV-related cancers are striking far earlier than we used to see. Patients in their twenties are coming in with cervical, oral, and throat cancers -- many of which could be avoided with timely vaccination and proper awareness."

While other cancers develop over decades, HPV-related cancers progress rapidly and silently.

Prevention through vaccination and early screening should be treated with the same urgency as any national health emergency.

The virus, which spreads through intimate skin-to-skin contact, is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections globally.

While the body clears most HPV infections on its own, certain high-risk strains can persist.

In women, it is the leading cause of cervical cancer, while in men and women alike, it is now strongly linked to oral, anal, and throat cancers.

A lack of awareness and social stigma surrounding HPV leads to poor vaccination rates and negligible screening coverage.

Routine screening is vital as a young woman with no symptoms may already have precancerous changes in the cervix. Similarly, oral HPV infections in men often go unnoticed. India does not have a national HPV vaccination program for all adolescents, although the vaccines are approved and available in private settings. *—PTI*

Kerala doc exposes shortage of hospital equipment

T'PURAM, 29 JUNE

A senior doctor at Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital has ignited controversy following his social media post about a severe shortage of surgical equipment affecting surgeries. Dr Haris Chirakkal, head of the Urology department, claimed that many surgeries had been postponed due to equipment unavailability and that patients were often compelled to purchase equipment themselves.

Dr Chirakkal expressed frustration over inadequate responses from senior officials, stating, "Many of my colleagues have joined the private sector... I wanted to extend my service in the government sector." Health Minister Veena George acknowledged the systemic issues raised by Dr Chirakkal

and promised a thorough investigation into the matter.

Despite pushback from the Director of Medical Education, who labelled Chirakkal's comments as "misleading", support for the doctor has poured in from medical associations, emphasising that many colleagues refrain from voicing their concerns due to fear of retaliation. *— PTI*

HUMANOIDS CHASE THE GOAL

In a first for China, four teams of humanoid robots competed in fully autonomous 3-on-3 football matches in Beijing, thrilling spectators more for their AI prowess than athletic skill. Part of a preview for the upcoming World Humanoid Robot Games, the robots used advanced visual sensors to identify the ball and navigate the field. While designed to stand after falls, some still required stretcher assistance, adding a touch of realism to the high-tech spectacle. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Asians, Muslims electrified by Mamdani's NYC triumph

Zohran Mamdani's shock victory in New York City's Democratic primary for mayor has sent waves of excitement through South Asian and Muslim communities across the city — and far beyond it. The 33-year-old state assemblyman, a democratic socialist, overcame long odds and defeated former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo in a ranked-choice vote that has upended political expectations.

For comedian Hari Kondabolu, a longtime friend of Mamdani, the win is deeply emotional. "So many of us have had those experiences of being brown in New York, a city that feels like ours, but didn't always treat us like it after 9/11," he said. "Twenty-five years later, it's surreal. It's the same city, but it's not, because we've elected this person."

Born in Kampala, Uganda, to Indian parents, Mamdani came to the US aged seven and became a citizen in 2018. His potential election as New York's first Asian American and Muslim mayor marks a historic moment, particularly for the city's more than 300,000 South Asian residents.

Mamdani's campaign drew energy from across Indian, Pakistani and broader Muslim communities, even among those who don't agree with all of his positions. For many, his rise is symbolic of hope and belonging in a city long grappling with racism and xenophobia.

"My mum was texting her friends to vote for him. I've never seen her do that before," said Kondabolu. "It's personal now."

Snigdha Sur, founder of 'The Juggernaut', noted how the excitement has reached the diaspora. "So many global South Asians are saying, 'This guy is my mayor,' even if they don't live in New York City," she said.

However, Mamdani's outspoken criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling him a "war criminal", has sparked backlash among some in the diaspora. Despite that, the broader response remains overwhelmingly positive.

Born in Kampala, Uganda, to Indian parents, Zohran Mamdani came to the US aged seven and became a citizen in 2018 ***PHOTO: PTI***

Thasin Sardar, a Muslim American in Michigan, said he felt "an instant connection" when he first heard Mamdani speak. "As a Muslim American, this victory puts my trust back in the people," he said. "They looked past his religion, skin colour, and immigrant background to value his policies."

New York voter Zainab Shabbir shared that her relatives in California were just as thrilled. "My family were like, 'It's so nice to see a South Asian Muslim candidate become mayor of a major city.'" She said Mamdani's progressive vision drew her in, more than his identity. "He was very friendly and genuine when we met at a fundraiser."

Shabbir believes Mamdani's rise could shift political focus for some immigrant families. "A lot of older Muslim communities are still focused on politics back home. Seeing someone like Zohran in office could really change that."

Mamdani's campaign stood out not just for its message, but for its authenticity and cultural fluency. He visited mosques, spoke Hindi in videos, and dropped Bollywood references. Congressman Ro Khanna praised him for embracing his identity: "He didn't run away from his heritage, he celebrated it, and still succeeded in American politics."

But the campaign wasn't just cultural symbolism, it resonated economically. Mamdani's messaging around affordable housing and free bus rides found strong support among working-class voters.

Tanzeela Rahman, a 29-year-old New Yorker from a low-income Bangladeshi background, said Mamdani made her feel seen. "Few politicians understand how hard it is to survive in this city. He sounds like a real New Yorker saying, 'Let's reclaim our power.'"

Despite his progressive stance, Mamdani comes from privilege. His mother is acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair, and his father, Mahmood Mamdani, is a Columbia University professor. He grew up in Queens and attended the elite Bronx High School of Science. Even so, his progressive policies have won traction even among wealthier South Asians.

"It was surprising that he did so well among the affluent, including his own community," said Sur. "His campaign had powerful soundbites that resonated widely."

Mamdani's vocal support for Palestine and criticism of Israel's actions in Gaza also energised pro-Palestinian voters, especially Muslims, while drawing sharp criticism from some Jewish groups. Nonetheless, he received endorsements from several Jewish politicians and activists.

Predictably, Mamdani's win triggered anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attacks online. Right-wing pundit Charlie Kirk tweeted that "legal immigration can ruin your country." Congressman Maxwell Frost responded, "For years they sold people the lie of 'we have no problem if you come the right way!'"

But Mamdani's supporters remain undeterred. "Clearly, that wasn't enough for him to lose," said Kondabolu. "There's a new generation that wants its voice heard, and they came out not just to vote, but to make others care. That's extraordinary."

With November's general election still ahead, Mamdani's primary win has already rewritten political expectations — and inspired a new generation of voters, activists and hopeful onlookers around the world. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Mumbai mosques go digital with 'azan app'

In the backdrop of curbs over the use of loudspeakers, half-a-dozen mosques in Mumbai have registered on a dedicated mobile phone application which relays the 'azan', or call to prayer, directly to the faithful in real-time.

The app, Online Azan, has been developed by a Tamil Nadu-based company.

Given the restrictions and sensitivities surrounding the use of loudspeakers for the call to prayer, the dedicated mobile app helps relay the azan directly to worshippers from local mosques, Fahad Khalil Pathan, managing trustee of Mahim Juma Masjid, told PTI.

The free app will allow users to listen to the azan at home, especially during Ramzan (the Islamic holy month of fasting) and other times when public announcements are restricted, he explained.

"The initiative comes after a police crackdown on the use of loudspeakers, where officers visited the mosque (Juma Masjid) and warned loudspeaker use could result in action. This led to the mosque temporarily disabling its sound system," Pathan stated.

To ensure that spiritual experience remains uninterrupted, especially for the elderly and those residing nearby (the mosque), the Juma Masjid in the Mahim area has adopted the app, he said.

The app was developed with technical support from a team of IT professionals from Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, and is now available on Android devices and iPhones.

The app plays a live audio stream of the azan through mobile phones, exactly when it is delivered from the mosque. Worshippers who cannot physically hear the azan due to sound restrictions can now receive it through this app in real-time, Pathan said.

The app also serves a larger community purpose by notifying users about prayer times and can be used like a smart watch alert system. Once installed and configured, it runs automatically.

Worshippers have praised the initiative, stating that even when loudspeakers are off, they can now still stay connected to their neighbourhood mosque's azan through their mobile phones.

Pathan said the 10x15 box speakers installed at mosques do not spread the sound of the azan as widely as the traditional loudspeakers. Many people who were accustomed to hearing the azan through loudspeakers have found it difficult to hear the call for prayers from the mosque.

In this backdrop, the Online Azan app has proven to be very helpful.

"We chose innovation over confrontation. Now, the faithful can stay connected to the azan timings regardless of the use of loudspeakers. In the past three days alone, 500 residents living near our masjid have registered on the app. A total of six masjids in Mumbai have registered with the app's server (located in India)," he informed.

Users simply need to download the app, select their locality, and choose the masjid nearest to them. They will then receive live notifications whenever the call to prayer is made from that mosque.

"It's important to clarify that the Bombay High Court has not ordered the removal of loudspeakers, but has set permissible sound limits, 55 decibels during the day and 45 decibels at night. In response and on recurring request from the police, we have voluntarily stopped using loudspeakers and have shifted to box speakers to comply with the guidelines," Pathan said.

Mohammed Ali, one of the co-founders of Online Azan, said the company that developed the app is three-year-old and has 250 mosques in Tamil Nadu registered with it.

The company asks for an application form, address proof of the mosque and the Aadhaar card of the person who gives the call to prayer, he said.

Mumbai Congress general secretary Asif Farooqui welcomed the move by mosques to adopt the new technology.

"Loudspeaker was just a medium to convey what needs to be said in a larger way. There should be no disturbance to others. Prayer is important and not loudspeaker. There are multiple ways to communicate the call to prayer and it is good mosques are adapting to new innovations," the politician noted.

BJP leader Kirit Somaiya has been spearheading a campaign against the use of loudspeakers on mosques in Mumbai.

The former MP has claimed that due to his campaign, 1,500 loudspeakers have been taken down in the metropolis, which he said were being used without permission from authorities. *—PTI*

Given the restrictions and sensitivities surrounding the use of loudspeakers for the call to prayer, the dedicated mobile app helps relay the azan directly to worshippers from local mosques ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Where's the credit: Activists fume as Kolhapuris get Prada makeover

The humble Kolhapuri chappal, a staple of Indian heritage and style, was catapulted onto the global fashion stage this month, as luxury fashion house Prada unveiled its Rs 1.2 lakh version of the iconic handcrafted footwear in its Spring/Summer 2026 show in Milan. Dubbed "leather flat sandals," the rebranded Kolhapuris sparked immediate outrage back home for what many called blatant cultural appropriation.

Designer and activist Laila Tyabji didn't mince words. "I am deeply annoyed and disgusted by the way Prada has appropriated something deeply Indian and traditional — without giving any recognition to the craftspeople or the culture it comes from. This is a metaphor for how we undervalue our heritage while the world repackages it as luxury," said the Dastkar chairperson, who has worked with artisans for decades.

The Kolhapuri, which received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2019, is rooted in centuries of craft, with origins in the town of Kolhapur and the surrounding districts of Sangli, Satara, Solapur, and parts of Karnataka. Traditionally made with vegetable-tanned leather and no synthetic components, the chappal features a T-strap design, detailed braiding, and open-toe practicality, blending comfort with heritage.

Dubbed 'leather flat sandals', the rebranded Kolhapuris sparked outrage in India for what many called blatant cultural appropriation ***PHOTO: X***

While Prada eventually acknowledged the "inspiration" behind the design, the damage had been done. In response to a letter from the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (MACCIA), Prada's head of corporate social responsibility, Lorenzo Bertelli, stated that the design shown on the ramp was still at the prototype stage and not confirmed for commercial release.

He added that Prada is committed to "responsible design practices" and "cultural engagement" with artisan communities.

But critics say the gesture came too late. "An apology is not just due to Kolhapur, but to India," said GI expert and heritage advocate Ganesh Hingare. Known for his role in over 100 GI cases, Hingare is now preparing a legal challenge under Section 22 of India's GI Act, alleging intellectual property infringement. "This is about more than a pair of sandals, it's about cultural theft and violation of legal protections for traditional knowledge," he said.

Hingare likened the Prada case to previous battles over basmati rice and turmeric, where India successfully defended its heritage on the global stage.

In Kolhapur, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Dhananjay Mahadik met with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, leading a delegation of local artisans to demand action and recognition. Meanwhile, on social media, calls for ethical fashion and respect for indigenous craftsmanship have surged.

Even global brand Bata joined the conversation. "The Kolhapuri chappal is not a 'design discovery', it's a living tradition," said Deepika Deepti, marketing head at Bata India. "Real originality doesn't come with a luxury tag — it comes with legacy."

The backlash against Prada also reignited debate over recurring instances of cultural appropriation.

From Rs 200 jholas now being sold for Rs 4,000 on global fashion platforms to traditional lehengas repackaged as "Y2K maxi skirts," Indian designs continue to be co-opted by Western brands, often without credit or compensation to the original communities.

In Delhi's Janpath Market, 73-year-old Ashok Grover, who has been selling Kolhapuris since the 1970s, is watching the controversy closely. "Demand had been falling, but suddenly we've had so many inquiries," he said. "These companies invest in marketing and slap a massive price tag on products that aren't even theirs. That Prada chappal wouldn't cost more than Rs 3,000 to make. I can't even sell it for Rs1,000 here."

Grover remembers a time when Kolhapuris sold for Rs 10. He hopes the renewed global attention might revive interest, and dignity, for the original craft.

Some fashion experts see a silver lining. "This spotlight on Kolhapuris could reignite interest in Indian heritage footwear," said a Mumbai-based stylist. "But only if it translates into real visibility, credit, and economic benefit for the artisans."

Kolhapuris are not just fashion, they are history. Once favoured by royalty, they're still handcrafted today using techniques passed down through generations. The GI tag was meant to protect such traditions from misappropriation and boost rural livelihoods.

As the Prada episode plays out, it has served as a sharp reminder: cultural heritage is not a trend to be borrowed and sold — it is a legacy to be honoured. *—PTI*

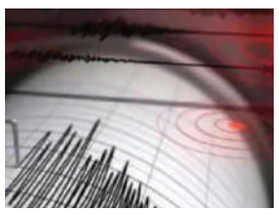


PHOTO: X

5.5 magnitude earthquake shakes Pak, injures five

ISLAMABAD, 29 JUNE

A 5.5 magnitude earthquake struck Pakistan's Balochistan province on Sunday, resulting in at least five injuries and the destruction of two houses, with three others partially damaged. The earthquake's epicentre was near the Musa Khel district, lying at a depth of 28km. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) commenced relief operations, distributing tents to displaced residents. Meanwhile, a 4.2 magnitude earthquake occurred in Nepal earlier at a shallow depth of 10 kilometres. The National Center for Seismology reported the earthquake's impact, noting the potential for aftershocks. Nepal's vulnerability to seismic events leads to significant earthquake risks throughout the region. ***—PTI/ANI***

Bulgaria protests Euro adoption, seeks referendum

SOFIA, 29 JUNE

Thousands of protesters gathered in central Sofia on Saturday to oppose Bulgaria's planned adoption of the euro, scheduled for 1 January. Opponents, including civic and nationalist groups, have demanded a national referendum on the currency change. Their rally culminated in plans to establish a tent camp in the square, dubbed "Town of the Lev," after Bulgaria's current currency. Kostadin Kostadinov, leader of the pro-Russian Vazrazhdane party, decried the euro adoption, claiming it would amount to an "anti-state coup" that jeopardises national sovereignty. Amid rising euroscepticism fueled by misinformation on social media, the government coalition remains poised to survive a no-confidence vote next week. ***—PTI***

Serbians stir for early polls; clash with cops

BELGRADE, 29 JUNE

Dozens of anti-government protesters were detained during clashes with riot police in Serbia's capital on Saturday, during a massive rally against populist President Aleksandar Vucic demanding an early parliamentary election. The protest by tens of thousands of demonstrators was held after nearly eight months of persistent dissent led by Serbia's university students that have rattled Vucic's firm grip on power in the Balkan country. The huge crowd chanted: "We want elections!" as they filled the capital's central Slavija Square and several blocks around it, with many unable to reach the venue. Six police officers and an unknown number of citizens were injured, police said. ***—PTI***

37 killed in bus collision in remote area of Tanzania

DAR ES SALAM, 29 JUNE

At least 37 people were killed in a devastating bus collision in a remote area of northern Tanzania, local officials reported on Sunday. The tragic incident occurred on Saturday evening in the Sabasaba region along the Moshi–Tanga highway, where two buses collided and subsequently burst into flames, leaving an additional 30 individuals injured. President Samia Suluhu Hassan expressed her profound sorrow in a statement, offering condolences to the families affected by the tragedy. "May God grant peace to the souls of the departed and a swift recovery to those injured," she said, while also urging for stricter adherence to road safety regulations. Despite ongoing government efforts to reduce road fatalities, Tanzania continues to grapple with high rates of traffic accidents. ***—PTI***

MAKE THE DEAL: TRUMP CALLS FOR GAZA CEASEFIRE

Calls Netanyahu trial a witch hunt; IDF orders evacuation

President Donald Trump with Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Mrco Rubio ***PHOTO: PTI***

TEL AVIV, 29 JUNE

US President Donald Trump on Sunday pleaded for progress in ceasefire talks in the war in Gaza, calling for a deal that would halt the fighting in the 20-monthlong conflict as the sides appeared to be inching closer to an agreement.

An Israeli official said plans were being made for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to travel to Washington, DC, in the coming weeks, a sign there may be movement on a new deal.

"MAKE THE DEAL IN GAZA. GET THE HOSTAGES BACK!!!" Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social early Sunday.

Simultaneously, Trump slammed Netanyahu's corruption trial. He called the trial "a POLITICAL WITCH HUNT, very similar to the Witch Hunt that I was forced to endure."

In the post on Truth Social, he said the trial interfered with talks on a Gaza ceasefire.

"(Netanyahu) is right now in the process of negotiating a deal with Hamas, which will include getting the hostages back. How is it possible that the Prime Minister of Israel can be forced to sit in a courtroom all day long, over NOTHING," Trump wrote.

Trump had raised expectations Friday for a deal, saying there could be a ceasefire agreement within the next week. He said, "We're working on Gaza and trying to get it taken care of."

A top adviser to Netanyahu, Israeli Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer, was set to travel to Washington this week for talks on a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, as per Al Jazeera, Israel continued its attacks across the Gaza Strip, including an attack that killed at least 20 people, including nine children, in Gaza City's Tuffah neighbourhood.

This comes as Israeli military on Sunday ordered a mass evacuation of Palestinians in large swaths of northern Gaza, an early target of the war that has been severely damaged by multiple rounds of fighting.The military will expand its escalating attacks to the city's northern section, calling for people to move southward to the Muwasi area in southern Gaza, Col Avichay Adraee said. ***—PTI***

IDF says it killed mastermind of 7 Oct attack

The Israel Defence Forces claimed that they eliminated Hakham Muhammad Issa Al-Issa--one of the founders of Hamas' military wing. The IDF in a late Saturday night post said that Issa was one of the masterminds of the 7 October, 2023 attack. The IDF said, "Issa led Hamas' force build-up, training, and planned the 7 October massacre. As Head of Combat Support, he advanced aerial & naval attacks against Israelis.

Trump denies $30B nuke deal with Iran

WASHINGTON, 29 JUNE

US President Donald Trump dismissed reports which suggested that his administration is considering a USD 30 billion deal with Iran to develop civilian nuclear facilities.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump wrote, "Who in the Fake News Media is the SleazeBag saying that Trump wants to give Iran $30 Billion to build non-military Nuclear facilities? Never heard of this ridiculous idea. It's just another HOAX put out by the Fake News in order to demean. These people are SICK!!!"

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Saturday said that Iran must ensure the safety and provide security to the International Atomic Energy Agency personnel. In a post on X, Rubio said, "Calls in Iran for the arrest and execution of IAEA Director General Grossi are unacceptable and should be condemned.... We support the IAEA's critical verification and monitoring efforts in Iran and commend the Director General and the IAEA for their dedication and professionalism. We call on Iran to provide for the safety and security of IAEA personnel."

Iran Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday that Tehran may reject any requests from the agency to inspect nuclear sites, calling Grossi's insistence on visits "meaningless and possibly even malign in intent." Iran had blamed Israel's offensive in part on the IAEA.

Meanwhile, at least 71 people were killed in Israel's attack on Tehran's Evin prison, a notorious facility where many political prisoners and dissidents have been held, Iran's judiciary said on Sunday. Those killed on 23 June included staff, soldiers, prisoners and members of visiting families. ***—ANI/PTI***

Hundreds of mourners take part in a recent funeral of Iranian armed forces generals, nuclear scientists and their family members killed in war with Israel in Tehran ***PHOTO: PTI***

Damaged Russian drones on display at the International Conference on Expanding Sanctions Against Russia in Kyiv on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Russia launches largest aerial attack on Ukraine

KYIV, JUNE 29

- Russia fired a total of 537 aerial weapons at Ukraine, including 477 drones and decoys and 60 missiles, Ukraine's air force said. Of these, 249 were shot down and 226 were lost

Russia launched its biggest aerial attack against Ukraine overnight, a Ukrainian official said on Sunday, part of an escalating bombing campaign that has further dashed hopes for a breakthrough in efforts to end the 3-year-old war.

Russia fired a total of 537 aerial weapons at Ukraine, including 477 drones and decoys and 60 missiles, Ukraine's air force said. Of these, 249 were shot down and 226 were lost, likely having been electronically jammed.

Yuriy Ihnat, head of communications for Ukraine's air force, said the onslaught was "the most massive air strike" on the country, taking into account both drones and various types of missiles. The attack targeted regions across Ukraine far from the frontline.

Poland and allied countries scrambled aircraft to ensure the safety of Polish airspace, the Polish air force said on Sunday.

Kherson regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said one person died in a drone strike. Six people were wounded in Cherkasy, including a child, said regional Gov. Ihor Taburets.

In the Lviv region in the far west of Ukraine, a large-scale fire broke out at an industrial facility in the city of Drohobych following a drone attack that also forced parts of the city to lose power. ***—PTI***

Indian woman missing after travelling to US

NEW JERSEY, 29 JUNE

Authorities are searching for a 24-year-old Indian woman, Simran, who has gone missing shortly after arriving in the United States for an arranged marriage. She was last seen on 20 June in Lindenwold, New Jersey, where surveillance footage captured her checking her phone and seemingly waiting for someone. Police have reported that she did not appear distressed in the video.

Simran was reported missing five days later, prompting an investigation that has raised concerns that the marriage may have been a ruse to secure free travel to the US, according to The New York Post. With no known relatives in the country and limited English skills, Simran's situation is particularly precarious; her only phone relies solely on Wi-Fi for communication.

Lindenwold police stated they have been unable to contact any family members in India for additional information on her whereabouts. Simran is described as approximately 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighing around 150 pounds, with a distinguishing scar on the left side of her forehead. She was last seen wearing grey sweatpants, a white T-shirt, and black flip-flops. ***—Agencies***

Senate Republicans pass Trump's 'Big Beautiful Bill'

WASHINGTON, 29 JUNE

Senate Republicans voting in a dramatic late Saturday session narrowly cleared a key procedural step as they race to advance President Donald Trump's package of tax breaks, spending cuts and bolstered deportation funds by his July Fourth deadline.

The tally, 51-49, came after a tumultuous night with Vice President JD Vance at the Capitol to break a potential tie. Tense scenes played out in the chamber as voting came to a standstill, dragging for more than three hours as holdout senators huddled for negotiations, and took private meetings off the floor. In the end, two Republicans opposed the motion to proceed, joining all Democrats.

> **The latest Senate draft bill will destroy millions of jobs in America and cause immense strategic harm to our country. It gives handouts to industries of the past while severely damaging industries of the future.... It's political suicide for the Republican Party**
>
> —Elon Musk, former DOGE head

Ahead of roll call, the White House released a statement of administrative policy saying it "strongly supports passage" of the bill. Trump himself was at his golf course in Virginia on Saturday with GOP senators posting about the visit on social media.

But by nightfall, Trump was lashing out against holdouts, threatening to campaign against one Republican, Sen Thom Tillis of North Carolina, who had announced he could not support the bill because of grave Medicaid cuts. Tillis and Sen Rand Paul of Kentucky voted against.

The 940-page "One Big Beautiful Bill Act was released shortly before midnight Friday, and senators are expected to grind through all-night debate and amendments in the days ahead. If the Senate is able to pass it, the bill would go back to the House for a final round of votes before it could reach the White House. ***—PTI***

B'desh cops arrest 5 for raping Hindu woman

DHAKA, 29 JUNE

- On 26 June, Fajr Ali Fajr of Ramchadrapur Panchkitta village in Comilla district, was detained and beaten by the people of the area for raping the wife of an expatriate from the same village

Bangladesh police have arrested five people accused of raping a Hindu woman in a remote village of Comilla district and circulating her video on social media. A video that has gone viral on social media shows a naked woman pleading for the protection of her dignity.

"On 26 June, Fajr Ali Fajr, 36, of Ramchadrapur Panchkitta village under Muradnagar police station of Comilla district, was detained and beaten by the people of the area for raping the wife of an expatriate from the same village," Police said.

"Later, the injured Fajr Ali fled from there. Some people present at the crime scene recorded a video of the victim and spread it on social media," it added.

"A case has been registered at Muradnagar Police Station in this regard. The police have arrested the accused Fajr Ali and four others who captured the video," the police said. ***—ANI***

YUNUS AIDE VOWS B'DESH'S 'MOST CREDIBLE' POLLS

DHAKA, 29 JUNE

The upcoming general elections in Bangladesh are being touted as the "most credible and peaceful" in the country's history, according to Shafiqul Alam, Press Secretary to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. Speaking to journalists in Khulna, Alam affirmed that the interim government has implemented all necessary measures to ensure free and fair polls.

Scheduled for the first half of April next year, Yunus announced the elections last month. Alam said these elections will take place in a festive and peaceful environment, emphasising their significance in restoring democracy. ***—PTI***

IRAN–ISRAEL WAR

Afghan migrants return home empty hands

KABUL, 29 JUNE

According to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, more than 72,000 families from Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey have returned to Afghanistan either forcibly or voluntarily in the past three months ***PHOTO: X***

After the end of Iran and Israel war, the flow of Afghan migrants returning from Iran has significantly intensified. Many returnees have arrived in Afghanistan with "bitter memories, empty hands, and an uncertain future," TOLO News said.

Qamar, a returnee from Iran, said he had lived there for nearly eight years. "We thought life would get better there, but it didn't. Then the war started, and we said, our own country is calm, let's go back."

Mohammad, also returning from Iran, said, "If they can't do anything else, at least speak with the Iranian government to ensure migrants are returned with dignity."

Meanwhile, deported Afghan nationals from Pakistan have complained of a lack of food and shelter in a Kabul camp. "If something can be done for our situation, we ask for help. I am disabled, and so are these children. We don't even have land or a tent," said Halima, a returnee.

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation stated that more than 72,000 families from Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey have returned to Afghanistan either forcibly or voluntarily in the first three months of the current solar year.

This comes as tourists begin trickling into Afghanistan, something the Taliban government has been gunning for.

The Taliban, which seized power more than three years ago is yet to be formally recognised by any other nation.

"The Afghan people are warm and welcoming and wish to host tourists from other countries and engage with them," Deputy Minister of Tourism Qudratullah Jamal told said in early June. "Tourism brings many benefits to a country. We've considered those and aim for our nation to take full advantage of them." ***—ANI/PTI***

Japan's H-2A retires with a successful final mission

TOKYO, 29 JUNE

The H-2A rocket lifts off from in Tanegashima Space Center on Sunday ***PHOTO: X***

Japan on Sunday successfully launched a climate change monitoring satellite on its mainstay H-2A rocket, which made its final flight before it is replaced by a new flagship designed to be more cost competitive in the global space market.

The H-2A rocket lifted off from the Tanegashima Space Center in southwestern Japan, carrying the GOSAT-GW satellite as part of Tokyo's effort to mitigate climate change. The satellite was released into a planned orbit about 16 minutes later. The launch follows several days of delays because of malfunctioning of the rocket's electrical systems.

Sunday's launch marked the 50th and final flight for the H-2A, which has served as Japan's mainstay rocket to carry satellites and probes into space with a near-perfect record since its 2001 debut. It will be fully replaced by the H3, which is already in operation, as Japan's new main flagship. "Even though our launches seemed stable, we have run into difficulties and overcome them one by one," said Iwao Igarashi, senior general manager of the space systems division at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, which operated launch services. ***—PTI***

Slice SFB aiming to close in black by FY26

MUMBAI, 29 JUNE

Slice Small Finance Bank (SFB), following a merger with North East SFB, has achieved monthly profitability and is poised to conclude FY26 in the black. Executive Director Rajan Bajaj stated that the bank, adequately capitalised, is not seeking additional funding and is concentrating on expanding its pan-India presence through cost-effective digital channels. Previously, North East SFB reported a substantial loss of Rs 441 crore. The bank is rapidly increasing its base, adding approximately 3,00,000 new accounts and offering competitive savings rates aligned with the RBI's repo rate. Slice SFB continues to serve underbanked sectors with consumer and business loans, recently launching a UPI-based credit card targeting over 300 million users. *—PTI*

Delegation delays China trip for rare earth magnet talks

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

A delegation of Indian auto industry representatives is still awaiting formal approval from the Chinese commerce ministry to depart for China regarding urgent talks on rare earth magnets. With around 40-50 executives having received visas last month, they are anxious about the lack of appointments from Chinese authorities. The domestic auto sector is confronting shortages due to restrictions imposed by China on the export of rare earth elements and related magnets since 4 April. The Chinese government now mandates special export licences, impacting India's imports, as over 80 per cent of its magnet supplies typically come from China. The delays have resulted in significant production concerns for Indian automotive manufacturers. *—PTI*

PHOTO: xxx

NIF seeks Fadnavis' help in ₹1,950 cr settlement

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

The NSEL Investors Forum (NIF) has written to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, seeking his support for a proposed one-time settlement worth Rs 1,950 crore between investors and the National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSEL). This aims to bring major relief to thousands of traders whose funds have remained stuck since the NSEL payment crisis of July 2013. In a 19 June letter to the CM, the forum stated that "any decent or negative response from the State/ Competent Authority/ EOW in the NCLT might derail or delay the settlement process...We humbly urge the Chief Minister to issue necessary directions to relevant authorities and departments to avoid any hasty or negative steps that may derail or delay the proposed settlement," the forum stated. *—PTI*

Warren Buffett announces $6B in donations

NEW YORK, 29 JUNE

Famed investor Warren Buffett is donating USD 6 billion worth of his company's stock to five foundations, bringing the total he has given to them since 2006 to roughly $60 billion, based on their value when received. Berkshire Hathaway owns Geico, Dairy Queen and a range of other businesses, and Buffett is donating nearly 12.4 million of the Class B shares of its stock. Those shares have a lower and easier-to-digest price tag than the company's original Class A shares, and each of the B shares was worth USD 485.68 at their most recent close on Friday. The largest tranche is going to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Trust, which will receive 9.4 million shares. *—PTI*

India's port ban on Pak cargo hikes shipping costs

Post Pahalgam, India has restricted shipping from Pak

ISLAMABAD, 29 JUNE

India's ban on ships carrying Pakistani goods from anchoring at its ports has increased freight charges and transit time, according to a media report.

Following the Pahalgam terror attack, India imposed a comprehensive ban, effective 2 May, 2025, on the direct or indirect import or transit of goods originating in or exported from Pakistan.

Pakistani importers said the Indian ban has resulted in longer shipping times and higher freight charges, Dawn newspaper reported on Sunday.

"Mother vessels are not coming to Pakistan due to this Indian action, which delays our imports by 30 to 50 days," said Javed Bilwani, President of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He said importers are now relying on feeder vessels, which raises costs.

Exporters also reported a spike in shipping and insurance costs following the Indian ban. However, they said the overall impact on exports remains minimal, the paper reported.

The India-Pakistan trade relations soured after the Pulwama terror attack, following which India raised the import duty to 200 per cent on all goods imported from Pakistan *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

"There is no significant impact on exports..., except for a rise in insurance costs. Shipping charges had already gone up even before the escalation," said Aamir Aziz, an exporter of textile made-ups.

Pakistan's exports are heavily reliant on imported inputs for value addition. With the government maintaining tight controls on imports to conserve foreign exchange, any disruption in supply chains has broader economic implications, the paper said.

The India-Pakistan trade relations soured after the Pulwama terror attack, following which India raised the import duty to 200 per cent on all goods imported from Pakistan.

Formal trade relations between Pakistan and India have remained frozen since 2019, and bilateral trade declined from USD 2.41 billion in 2018 to USD 1.2 billion in 2024. Pakistan's exports to India decreased from USD 547.5 million in 2019 to just USD 480,000 in 2024. *—PTI*

AMID VALUATION CONCERNS

Russia's oil firm in talks with Reliance to sell stake in India

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Russian oil giant PJSC Rosneft Oil Company is reportedly in preliminary discussions with Reliance Industries regarding the sale of its 49.13 per cent stake in Nayara Energy. Nayara, which operates a 20-million tonnes-per-year oil refinery and 6,750 petrol stations across India.

The move could significantly enhance Reliance's position in the oil market, potentially surpassing Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to become the nation's leading oil refiner.

Despite the ongoing talks, sources indicate that reaching a definitive agreement remains uncertain, largely due to valuation concerns. Rosneft's officials have visited India multiple times over the past year to explore potential buyers, with the company seeking an exit from Nayara amid Western sanctions that hinder its ability to repatriate profits from Indian operations.

While Reliance has shown interest, the USD 20 billion valuation initially set by Rosneft has deterred many potential investors, including Adani Group and Saudi Aramco. Adani has recently declined the bid, citing concerns over the oil sector's future.

For Reliance, acquiring Nayara not only means gaining refineries and distribution capabilities, but will also significantly bolster its fuel marketing presence, which is vital in an industry where refining alone is often unprofitable.

Sources reveal that Rosneft has lowered its asking price to USD 17 billion, but this figure is still considered excessive by many parties, including Reliance.

No formal deal has been cemented, and Rosneft has yet to issue an official comment regarding the negotiations. *—PTI*

Mcap of nine top-10 firms surges by ₹2.3L cr

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 2,34,565.53 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainer, in-line with a buoyant trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark surged 1,650.73 points or 2 per cent.

From the top-10 pack, Infosys emerged as the only laggard, facing erosion from its valuation.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries jumped by Rs 69,556.91 crore to Rs 20,51,590.51 crore, the most among the top-10 firms.

Bharti Airtel's valuation surged by Rs 51,860.65 crore to Rs 11,56,329.94 crore and that of HDFC Bank rallied by Rs 37,342.73 crore to Rs 15,44,624.52 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Bajaj Finance zoomed Rs 26,037.88 crore to Rs 5,88,213.55 crore and that of ICICI Bank edged higher by Rs 24,649.73 crore to Rs 10,43,037.49 crore.

The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) climbed Rs 13,250.87 crore to Rs 6,05,523.65 crore and that of State Bank of India went up by Rs 8,389.15 crore to Rs 7,18,788.90 crore.

The mcap of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) gained Rs 3,183.91 crore to Rs 12,45,761.80 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever climbed Rs 293.7 crore to Rs 5,41,850.99 crore.

In contrast, the mcap of Infosys declined by Rs 5,494.8 crore to Rs 6,68,256.29 crore. *—PTI*

Markets to ride on macro data, US tariff

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Stock market investors would track macroeconomic data announcements such as industrial production, US tariff related developments and other global trends this week, which may influence sentiment, analysts said.

Trading activity of foreign investors and crude oil prices would also remain in the limelight during the week, experts noted.

"This week brings a series of important economic data releases from India and the United States, which are likely to influence market sentiment and central bank outlooks. In India, the week begins on June 30 with the release of Industrial Production (YoY) for May.

"On July 1, attention will turn to the manufacturing PMI for June, which reflects the health of India's industrial sector and order inflows. This will be followed by the services PMI on July 3," according to Bajaj Broking Research.

PHOTO: PTI

Equity benchmarks staged a sharp rally last week helped by easing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and a steep decline in crude oil prices. Last week, the Sensex and Nifty surged 2 per cent each. *—PTI*

Zomato founder eyeing aviation foray with LATA

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Zomato co-founder Deepinder Goyal is now venturing into regional aviation with LAT Aerospace (LATA), co-founded by Surobhi Das. The startup aims to transform India's underutilised air infrastructure by offering affordable, high-frequency flights to Tier 2 and 3 cities. Highlighting that only 150 of India's 450+ airstrips see commercial flights, Das said millions still rely on slow road or rail travel. LAT Aerospace envisions "buses in the sky" — small aircraft operating from compact "air-stops" closer to where people live. *—PTI*

Anant to get ₹10–20 cr salary as Reliance Head

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Anant Ambani, the youngest son of billionaire Mukesh Ambani, has been appointed Executive Director of Reliance Industries Ltd, with an annual salary ranging from Rs 10 crore to Rs 20 crore, plus significant perks, says a shareholder notice.

In 2023, Anant, alongside his siblings Akash and Isha, was inducted as a non-executive director, receiving no salary and a sitting fee. As Executive Director, the 30-year-old will now benefit from a salary package, which includes various allowances. These encompass accommodation or house rent, travel, medical reimbursements and security.

Mukesh unveiled this move as part of a succession plan for India's most valuable company, aiming to avert potential sibling disputes similar to those that arose after his father's death in 2002. Anant Ambani, who has been involved with Reliance since 2015, plays a crucial role in the company's energy ventures and is also active in philanthropic activities through the Reliance Foundation. *—PTI*

Mahindra Holidays gets ₹363 cr tax demand notice

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd on Sunday said it has received a tax demand notice of over Rs 363 crore including penalty, related to reporting of integrated goods and services tax (IGST) on its club membership services.

The company in a regulatory filing informed that it is taking appropriate steps to pursue legal remedies before the appropriate authority in this regard.

The show cause notice, dated 28 June, 2025, was issued by the State Tax Officer, Anna Salai Central III, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

"The Company has received a demand Show Cause Notice from the Authority for FY 2018-19 demanding Rs 363,07,96,980 (tax of Rs 181,53,98,490 and penalty of Rs 181,53,98,490) under applicable provisions of TNGST Act, 2017 & CGST Act, 2017 on account of reporting of IGST on club membership services instead of CGST and SGST and sudden decrease of IGST payment since August," Mahindra Holidays stated. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

RBL Bank aims to widen margin from retail assets

MUMBAI, 29 JUNE

PHOTO: PTI

RBL Bank is aiming to boost its net interest margins (NIMs) by focusing on higher-yielding retail assets, a senior official has said. As part of this strategy, the bank will launch commercial vehicle (CV) and used four-wheeler financing within the next three months.

Despite a recent dip in overall NIMs—from 5.45 per cent to 4.89 per cent and a 76 per cent drop in Q4 net profit to Rs 86 crore, the bank is targeting a rebound to 5.1 per cent.

The retail loan share will be maintained at around 31 per cent.

The bank plans to deepen its presence in tier-II and III cities through its 550 branches and over 1,500 business correspondent touchpoints.

Key focus areas include gold loans, tractor finance, affordable housing, and small business loans, with an emphasis on quick loan processing and cost efficiency.

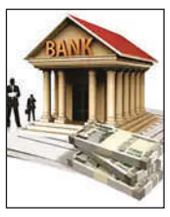
In the used car space, RBL Bank will collaborate with resale platforms to offer integrated loan options online. Meanwhile, collection performance in the microfinance segment has improved, though political disruptions continue to affect Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The bank remains optimistic about a stronger performance in the second half of FY26. *—PTI*

FinMin urges PSBs to list subsidiaries publicly

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

India's Finance Ministry has advised public sector banks (PSBs) to monetise investments in their subsidiaries and joint ventures by listing them on stock exchanges, once operations are sufficiently scaled up to ensure strong returns.



Sources indicate around 15 subsidiaries or joint ventures are being prepared for initial public offerings (IPOs) or strategic divestment over the medium to long term. Banks have been encouraged to invest in scaling operations, improving governance, and enhancing professional decision-making and operational efficiency.

State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest lender, is expected to consider listing SBI General Insurance and SBI Payment Services in the future. SBI General Insurance posted a profit of Rs 509 crore in FY 2024–25. SBI's stake in the insurer has slightly declined to 68.99 per cent following fresh equity allotment.

SBI Payments, one of India's largest merchant acquirers, had over 33.1 lakh touchpoints as of March 2024.

Meanwhile, Canara Bank is moving to list Canara Robeco Asset Management and has approved a 14.5 per cent stake dilution in Canara HSBC Life Insurance ahead of a planned listing. *—PTI*

FOCUS SHIFT

Indian IT giants brand self as 'AI-native'

NEW DELHI, 29 JUNE

Indian IT majors are aggressively repositioning themselves as AI-native firms, focusing on high-margin applications and integration over high-risk, capital-intensive foundational research.

A deep dive into the FY25 annual reports from the industry behemoths – TCS, Infosys, Wipro, and Tech Mahindra – indicates that in the global AI race, India's tech titans are not competing to invent foundational AI, they are positioning themselves to become premier integrators of it.

The shift from general digital transformation to a specific AI focus is captured in the very titles of their annual reports. TCS frames its strategy within "The Perpetually Adaptive Enterprise," driven by a stated "AI-First approach."

The shift from general digital transformation to specific AI focus is evident in the very titles of the annual reports of major companies *PHOTO: AI*

Infosys takes an even more direct path with its theme, "AI Your Enterprise," while Wipro focuses on its role as an enabler in "Helping Clients Build AI-Powered Future-Ready Businesses."

Tech Mahindra joins this chorus with "AI Delivered Right."

TCS has reported that over 1 lakh of its employees have acquired "higher order skills in AI/ML and GenAI, while Infosys has said that over 2.70 lakh of its employees are now "AI-Aware".

Similar trends are observed in Wipro and Tech Mahindra as well.

Global AI market is projected to skyrocket, reaching an estimated USD 1.3 trillion over the next decade, according to industry estimates.

Their bet is that as AI becomes a utility, the most enduring value will be captured not by those who create it, but by those who can expertly wire it into every corner of the enterprise. *—PTI*

India-Pak clash likely in Asia Cup 2025: Report

RIYADH, 29 JUNE

The ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan have put the Asia Cup 2025 in Jeopardy. Following the brutal terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam, Kashmir, border tensions arose between the two nations, which eventually led to boycott calls for Pakistani artists and actors in India. Seeing this tension, there were reports that the BCCI might boycott India's matches against Pakistan both in the ACC and ICC events. However, a new report has emerged, stating that the Asia Cup 2025 is likely to proceed as planned.

According to Cricbuzz, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) plans to host the tournament in September, with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and the UAE as participants.

"While nothing concrete has been finalised as yet, indications are that a formal decision could be taken next week. What's more, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) is hopeful of releasing the schedule for the six-team tournament in the first week of July, when it is expected to convene," stated Cricbuzz.

It was further stated that the promotional activities for the tournament have also begun, and the UAE is the frontrunners as the hosts, although there is also some discussion around staging it in a hybrid format.

Originally, India was the host for the Asia Cup 2025, but the tensions against Pakistan have forced the ACC to look for a new host.

Earlier during the coverage of the first Test between India and England in Leeds, a promotional video of the Asia Cup 2025 went viral on social media, featuring T20I captains of India (Suryakumar Yadav, Sri Lanka (Charith Asalanka), and Bangladesh (Najmul Hossain Shanto).

The ACC is currently headed by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Mohsin Naqvi. More recently, a report claimed that the PCB is in talks with its Afghanistan counterpart to organise a tri-series in August involving hosts UAE in the event of the Asia Cup getting cancelled or postponed. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

A ton in T20Is is pretty special: Smriti Mandhana

NOTTINGHAM, 29 JUNE

Smashing a maiden T20I century against England was "pretty special" as the shortest format is "not one of my strengths", said India stand-in skipper Smriti Mandhana after powering her side to a 97-run victory in the opening match here. Mandhana struck her first T20I ton in her 149th game, a 62-ball 112 studded with 15 fours and three sixes, to help the visitors to 210 runs before dismissing the hosts for 113 in 14.5 overs. It's a nice feeling because this format is something which, for me as a batter, I need to keep pushing and keep improving. It's not a very natural format for me.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Daren Sammy fined for criticizing TV umpire

BRIDGETOWN, 29 JUNE

West Indies coach Daren Sammy has been fined 15% of his match fee after publicly criticizing TV umpire Adrian Holdstock during the first test against Australia in Barbados. The sanction followed Sammy's post-play press conference on day two, where he called for consistency in Decision Review System (DRS) rulings after a series of contentious calls at Kensington Oval. Sammy expressed frustration that his side was on the "sharp end of the stick" for two caught behind decisions that had been referred to Holdstock, which saw Australia batter Travis Head given not out, while West Indies wicketkeeper batter Shai Hope was adjudicated out.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Esports WC: Praggu joins Carlsen at Team Liquid

DUBAI, 29 JUNE

R. Pragnanandhaa has joined Magnus Carlsen at Team Liquid, a Dutch esports organisation, a week before the Esports World Cup begins in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Online chess is making its debut at the second edition of the Esports World Cup, and the Indian grandmaster is the third member of a team that has World No. 1 Carlsen and four-time U.S. Champion Fabiano Caruana. The announcement came a day after Praggnanandhaa won the 2nd UzChess Cup, and he becomes the third Indian in contention to secure a spot in the World Cup finals.—*PTI*

Nikhat, Ankushita advance to semifinals

HYDERABAD, 29 JUNE

Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen advanced to the semifinals of the 51kg division after a dominant win on the second day of the Elite Women's Boxing Tournament here on Sunday.Zareen delighted the home crowd with a dominant 5:0 victory over Kalpana.Former youth world champion Ankushita Boro also showcased her class, advancing to the semifinals of the 65kg category with a clinical 5:0 win over Rajasthan pugilist Parthvi.Other notable quarterfinal results saw Preeti (54kg), Jyoti (51kg), and Devika Ghorpade (51kg) book their semifinal berths with clean, unanimous wins..The semifinals will be held on Monday. —*PTI*

India is too dependent on Bumrah: Azharuddin

India should play spinner Kuldeep Yadav

HYDERABAD, 31 OCT

Former captain Mohammad Azharuddin said India should play left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav in the Edgbaston Test against England to add more experience to their bowling attack and reduce the burden on pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah.

Across the first Test at Leeds, which India lost by five wickets, the visitors were relying heavily on Bumrah for wickets and cutting the flow of runs. "They are too dependent on Bumrah. It's not easy because you need more experienced bowlers, and they should play Kuldeep Yadav," Azharuddin told PTI Videos.

India will face England in the second Test at Birmingham from 2 July, and the pitch, which is expected to be dry, could offer some assistance to Kuldeep. India made a good first innings total of 471 with skipper Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and Rishabh Pant making hundreds.

England feared Bumrah's return, chased target in a hurry

England wicketkeeper-batter Jamie Smith revealed that the decision to aggressively target Ravindra Jadeja in the 82nd over during the chase of 371 against India in the first Test was a strategic move designed to pre-empt a possible intervention by Jasprit Bumrah with the second new ball. With England cruising towards their target at 355-5, Smith and Joe Root were firmly in control. But the fear of Bumrah returning to bowl in a last-ditch effort from India prompted Smith to launch a decisive counterattack, smashing Jadeja for two sixes and a boundary to complete a memorable five-wicket win for the hosts. —*PTI*

Honduras midfielder Carlos Pineda celebrates scoring the game-winning penalty kick
PHOTO: X/@HONDURAS

Honduras beats Panama in shootout to reach SFs

GLENDALE, 29 JUNE

Carlos Pineda scored the decisive penalty shot as Honduras beat Panama in a shootout after the teams played to a 1-1 draw in the CONCACAF Gold Cup quarterfinals on Saturday night. Honduras advanced to the semifinals on Wednesday in Santa Clara, California, where it will face the winner of Saudi Arabia and Mexico. It's the first time Honduras has made the Gold Cup semis since 2013.

Honduras struggled to generate many scoring opportunities until coming alive late in the second half. Los Catrachos evened the score in the 82nd minute when Anthony Lozano deflected a shot from Carlos Pineda into the corner of the net following a corner kick.Both teams made four out of five shots in the initial round of kicks. Honduras had a chance to win with its fifth attempt, but Orlando Mosquera made a diving stop on Lozano's shot. Panama's Eduardo Guerrero sailed the next penalty kick over the net, giving Honduras another chance to win. This time, Pineda took advantage, burying his shot into the bottom left corner to give Honduras the 5-4 shootout win.Panama dominated possession in the first half, but couldn't break through until Cristian Martínez was fouled by Honduras' Edwin Rodríguez in the 44th minute just inside the penalty area. Ismael Díaz took the shot and calmly scored his Gold Cup-leading sixth goal, finding the bottom left corner of the net to give Panama a 1-0 lead. —*PTI*

Chelsea set up QFs with Palmeiras

Chelsea beat Benfica in a game which went on for close to five hours at the Club World Cup on Saturday to set up a quarter-final showdown with Brazilian side Palmeiras at the tournament in the United States. The London club were grateful to extra-time goals by Christopher Nkunku, Pedro Neto, and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall to give them a 4-1 victory over Benfica. Their late burst of scoring settled a last-16 tie which took four hours, 39 minutes to complete at Charlotte's Bank of America Stadium in North Carolina after a near two-hour weather delay.

Mexico beats Saudi Arabia 2-0

GLENDALE, 29 JUNE

Alexis Vega snapped a 19-match scoreless streak in international play with a goal in the 49th minute and defending champion Mexico beat Saudi Arabia 2-0 in the CONCACAF Gold Cup quarterfinals on Saturday night.

Mexico will face Honduras in the semifinals on Wednesday in Santa Clara, California. Honduras beat Panama in a penalty shootout earlier Saturday after the teams played to a 1-1 draw in regulation.

The 27-year-old Vega scored after finding some room to work following a nice pass from Raúl Jimenez. His first shot bounced off goalkeeper Nawaf Alaquidi, but the forward quickly corralled the rebound and sent it through Alaquidi's legs and into the net. Vega was initially ruled offside, but after review, the goal was allowed, and Mexico had a 1-0 lead. Mexico coach Javier Aguirre was pleased with how his team played, particularly after halftime. —*PTI*

US OPEN BADMINTON

Shuttlers Tanvi, Ayush move into final

IOWA, 29 JUNE

Talented Indian shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Ayush Shetty moved into the finals of the US Open badminton tournament in contrasting fashion as they continued their impressive run in the Super 300 Tournament here.

The 16-year-old unseeded Indian Tanvi defeated Ukraine's seventh-seeded Polina Buhrova 21-14, 21-16 in the women's singles semifinal in just 34 minutes to make it to the title round. This was the teenager's second career victory against the Ukrainian in as many outings.

Tanvi will take on top seed Beiwen Zhang of the United States in the final.

Ayush, seeded fourth here, created a big upset by overcoming the challenge of top seed and world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese-Taipei 21-23, 21-15, 21-14 in a gruelling men's singles contest that lasted more than an hour. Ayush will face another tough opponent in the third-seed Brian Yang from Canada. Yang overcame the challenge of Chinese-Taipei's Liao Jhuo-Fu 21-10, 21-12.

In the semifinals, Tanvi had defeated her higher-ranked Malaysian opponent Karupathevan Letshanaa 21-13, 21-16, while Ayush had also dished out an excellent performance to get the better of junior world champion Chinese Taipei's Kuo Kuan Lin 22-20, 21-9. —*PTI*

Dutch MotoGP 2025: Marc Marquez wins

NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

Ducati's Marc Marquez won the Dutch Grand Prix on Sunday despite starting on the second row as the MotoGP championship leader claimed his sixth victory of the season, while his nearest contender and brother Alex, fractured his hand in a crash.

As Assen celebrated 100 years of racing at the Cathedral of Speed, it was Marc who took the lead on lap two and never looked back, with Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi finishing second while Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia came third. Bagnaia had won the last three races in Assen. —*PTI*

India outshines Timor Leste to win 2nd game on trot

CHIANG MAI, 29 JUNE

The Indian senior women's team continued their impressive run in the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers with a commanding 4-0 victory over Timor-Leste here on Sunday.

Winger Manisha Kalyan (12', 80') scored a brilliant brace, while Anju Tamang (58') and Lynda Kom Serto (86') added their names to the scoresheet in a one-sided contest that saw India dominate from start to finish at the 700th Anniversary Stadium. The Blue Tigresses led 1-0 at half-time. With the win, India now sit atop Group B with six points from two games, ahead of Iraq and Thailand, who are set to face each other later in the day. —*PTI*

SURUCHI, MANU AND SAMRAT RANA SHINE AT NATIONAL SELECTION TRIALS

DEHRADUN, 29 JUNE

Suruchi Inder Singh pipped Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker to win the women's 10m pistol event at the national selection trials for Group 'A' athletes, while Navy marksman Niraj Kumar completed a double in the 50m rifle 3 positions men's competition here Sunday.

In a star-studded final, Suruchi finished with a score of 245.6, 1.1 better than Bhaker, who shot 244.5 to finish in second place, while the seasoned Rahi Sarnobat ended third with a score of 223.1.

Suruchi was also way ahead of the field in the qualification round, finishing with a score of 585, four better than Esha Singh, who shot 581. Rahi (580), Manu (578-20x), Priya (578-17x), Pranjali (576), Sakshi (574-18x), and Simranpreet (574-15x) completed the top eight.

In the first final of the day, Samrat Rana leaped to first place with a 10.5 in the final shot ahead of Saurabh, who could only manage a 9.6 in the men's 10m air pistol event.

Eventually, Samrat ended with a score of 241.7 while Saurabh took second place with a total of 241.5. Aditya Malra finished in third with 217.8.

Niraj Kumar produced a clinical performance in the men's 50m rifle 3P final to win back-to-back trials. The Navy man shot 463, two better than Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, who took home another medal. —*PTI*

WIMBLEDON 2025

Alcaraz begins campaign for third straight title

LONDON, 29 JUNE

Two-time defending men's champion Carlos Alcaraz faces Italy's Fabio Fognini in the first round on the opening day of Wimbledon 2025 at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, London, on Monday. In women's singles, World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka will begin her campaign for a maiden title at the grass Major with a first-round clash against Canadian qualifier Carson Branstine. Carlos Alcaraz's first match on a grass court came just six years ago. When Wimbledon gets started Monday, the 22-year-old from Spain will play in the first Centre Court match of this fortnight, an honor reserved for the previous year's men's champion. The contest against Fabio Fognini will open Alcaraz's bid for a third consecutive championship at the place. Alcaraz is already 5-0 in Grand Slam finals, which includes going 2-0 at the French Open, which he won three weeks ago via a comeback from two sets down against No. 1 Sinner in the final, and 1-0 at the U.S. Open.

Novak Djokovic: Wimbledon best chance at record 25th Slam

It's become part of Novak Djokovic's routine now, particularly at Grand Slam tournaments: He shows up and gets asked at the start of the event, during the event, after the event, or sometimes all three whether this will be his final appearance there.

Happened again Saturday at Wimbledon, and his response was the same, it tends to be, which essentially amounts to: Who can tell? "Whether it could be my last dance," the 24-time major champion began, repeating the phrase used by the reporter who posed the question, "I'm not sure, as I'm not sure about Roland Garros or any other Slam that I play next." —*PTI*

Diksha Dagar in top 10 after three rounds in GM

HAMBURG, 29 JUNE

Diksha Dagar held onto her spot inside the top 10 despite a difficult third round at the Amundi German Masters here at the Green Eagle Golf Courses. Diksha shot a round of 1-over 74 with three birdies and four bogeys and was tied eighth.

Vani Kapoor (76) was T-21 and Avani Prashanth (74) was T-36 after three rounds. Singaporean star Shannon Tan produced a strong round of 5-under 68 to become the sole leader heading into the final day.

She made seven birdies and two bogeys in her round to move three shots clear of her closest rival for the title. She now has a combined score of 12 under par. Diksha's third round was a mixed tale as her front nine and back nine were contrasting in nature. She started on the front nine and played a bogey-free round with three birdies for the first 11 holes. In the last seven holes, she had four bogeys and fell down the leaderboard, barely hanging on within the top 10 with a combined score of three under par.—*PTI*